

OPPOSE Normandy Tower up-zoning

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City Clerk Agenda

To: City Council <CityCouncil@CambridgeMA.GOV>; Paden, Liza <lpaden@cambridgema.gov>;

Cc: Lopez, Donna <dlopez@cambridgema.gov>;

Clerk Lopez -- Please enter into the council record.

Ms. Paden - Please forward to the Planning Board.

I am a longtime resident (15+ years) of Cambridgeport and very concerned about the proposed 19 story luxury condo building in Central Sq. I have two concerns:

1) I am concerned about allowing a 19 story building into a city that does not have buildings even remotely that high. For what benefit will this bring the city? I don't think there is a clear benefit and the potential downsides are many -- i.e., other developers will want to follow suit, Cambridge is not planning/creating an infrastructure that will support high rise buildings like this, there is not enough affordable housing going up in contrast to luxury housing. The latter point brings me to my second concern...

2) While many aspects of Central Square's revitalization over the last decade or so have been wonderful, I think the housing prices are reaching a crisis point. Recent rental prices look like Manhattan prices and are only going to get worse unless some real planning is done. The diversity of Cambridge, especially Central Square is one of the reasons I live here and without planning, this area is going to be exclusively high-income residents with a handful of those who inherited their housing. Is that the kind of city/neighborhood we want?. I love living here and would like to raise my young children here -- they will attend the public schools in Kindergarten next year. If we did not already own our small condo, we could not afford the current market-value to rent our current home (which would be twice our current mortgage). With recent housing prices soaring, we cannot afford to move into a larger home right now and its unclear whether we will be able to in the future. This is true even though my husband and I are considered upper middle class - our salary doesn't stretch that far here. I know another family here whose rental apartment just went on the market for a price far more than they can afford (they are also upper middle class salary) and they are having a hard time finding an affordable 2-bedroom home to rent. Their child was just accepted into a neighborhood public school for Kindergarten, but it is unclear whether they can stay. Building more "luxury" condos at a ratio MUCH higher than affordable housing is not the solution. If better solutions aren't found, are we going to have to return to rent control?

Please don't pass this proposal. Let's be more planful. Although I am not familiar with all of the details, City Councilor Carlone's alternative proposal sounds more reasonable and options like his should be explored before allowing a 19-story luxury condo building to be approved.

Thank you,

Penny Haney
Glenwood Avenue